

NEWS RELEASE

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Jury Convicts Local Soldier of 2004 Robbery of U.S. Bank in Mattoon

Urbana, Illinois -- Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a federal jury deliberated four hours on Thursday afternoon, November 16, 2006, before finding Travis Jay Farris, age 24, previously from Mattoon, Illinois, guilty of bank robbery, carrying a firearm during the robbery, and conspiracy to commit armed robbery and mail fraud. The jury acquitted Farris of the charge of attempted robbery on February 17, 2004, of the Ramada Inn in Mattoon. Chief U.S. District Judge Michael P. McCuskey scheduled sentencing for March 13, 2007, at 9:00 a.m., in Urbana, and ordered Farris continue to be detained in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service pending sentencing.

Evidence presented by the government during the four days of trial established that on February 21, 2004, Farris and co-conspirator Jesse Matthew Coartney, also 24, robbed a US Bank branch located at 1900 Lakeland Boulevard in Mattoon, Illinois. During the robbery, Farris pointed a 9 millimeter semi-automatic pistol at two tellers and ordered them to the ground. Farris and Coartney stole \$3,632 from the bank. On the evening prior to the bank robbery, on February 20, 2004, Farris and Coartney burned Farris's 1999 Kia Sportage in southern Illinois so that Farris could later falsely report it stolen to his insurance company and obtain insurance proceeds. On March 1, 2004, Farris reported to basic training with the U.S. Army along with two of his brothers. Farris, the only one of his brothers still in the military, wore U.S. Army fatigues during the trial.

Coartney, of Mattoon, previously pled guilty to the robbery and is serving a 57-month prison term with the federal Bureau of Prisons.

The maximum statutory penalty for bank robbery is 20 years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. The gun conviction carries a mandatory minimum statutory penalty of seven years imprisonment, up to a maximum of life imprisonment, which must be served consecutively to the sentence imposed for the bank robbery and conspiracy. The maximum statutory penalty for conspiracy is five years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.

The charges are the result of an investigation by the Champaign, Illinois office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in coordination with the Mattoon Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugene Miller in the Urbana Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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